

# Impact of Museums in Cultural Society - A Case Study

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**Abstract**— Museums with strong brands or those that inhabit iconic buildings are increasingly used as cultural motifs in the destination-marketing strategies of public tourist bodies. Recent examples include the use of the British Museum in Visit Britain's Culture is Great campaign, or the Turner Contemporary as a symbol of Margate's brand enhancement. The latest figures from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) once again underlined the importance of museums to the visitor economy. Meanwhile, the new Arts Council England and Visit England partnership, which aims to help destinations develop their cultural tourism, provides an opportunity for museums to take a strategic lead in this area. But could it also result in greater reliance on marketing-orientated approaches that might not benefit the entire museum sector.

**Keywords**— Musuem, Cultural, Tourism and Industry.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The museum houses the nation's artistic treasures as well as many of the most precious archaeological finds such as the fossilized remains of early hominids, the most famous of which is "Lucy," the partial skeleton of a specimen of *Australopithecus afarensis*. Recently added to the basement gallery is a display on *Selam*, found between 2000 and 2004. Estimated to be 3.3 million years old, this *A. afarensis* specimen is considered to be the earliest child. In 1936, the concept of a museum was first introduced in Ethiopia when an exhibition was opened, displaying ceremonial costumes donated by the royal family and their close associates. The current NME grew from the establishment of the Institute of Archaeology, which was founded in 1958. The institute was founded to promote and facilitate the archaeological research mission in the northern part of Ethiopia by French archaeologists. The museum started its activities by exhibiting objects from these excavation missions. With the establishment of the Ethiopian Cultural Heritage Administration in 1976, the idea came up to open a National Museum, this was supported by the Government. The NME began to operate under the National Act which provides for the protection and preservation of antiquities,

and has legislative authority governing all sites and monuments throughout the country of Ethiopia.



Fig.1: Stone Statue sample at National Museum, Addis Ababa

## II. RELATED WORK

### A. The role of museums in cultural tourism:

Most museum professionals believe that museums were established for the purposes of education and learning, collection, conservation, research and enjoyment (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Resource, 2001). However, as society has changed, the economic role of museums has become more important. Simultaneously, more institutions have also become aware of their potential to add value to their community by attracting cultural tourists (DCMS, 1999).

They have become key partners in the tourist industry, and an important part of the creative and cultural industries. Thus, the role of museums has diversified in the 21st century. Culture has become a key factor in the competition among cities to attract visitors, and an important part of the service-based economy (Porter, 1998). The phenomenon of 'cultural tourism' has attracted much attention. Load (2002) said that 'cultural tourism has been identified as a growing sector of the tourism industry.

As the demand for cultural tourism has grown, museums have become important partners in the tourist industry, and greater emphasis is now being placed on their leisure function (Stephen, 2001). With their unique features, rich connotations, flexible open hours, multiple exhibition facilities, shops and restaurants they are ideally placed to

satisfy a range of consumer needs. Museums work with the tourist industry in a number of ways: by launching cooperative ventures with other cultural institutions, leisure venues and districts, and by supporting local festivals. From the economic viewpoint, museums are cultural products which attract tourists.

### **B. Economic impact of museums:**

In recent years, culture has become a key element in the competition among cities to attract visitors, and central to the new economic mix in many cities (Porter, 1998; Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993); museums, as cultural institutions, have become the catalysts of city development and boosted the power of local economies. Fleming (2006) described museums as 'defibrillators'. He said that, whatever their social value, museums act as an economic improver.

The economic benefit brought to local economies by the museum sector is now being recognized, and museums feel more able to ask for public support and local authority subsidy (Audit Commission, 1991). This economic benefit is also attracting the attention of museum managers and economic professionals.

Myerscough et al. (1988) pointed out that museums, as cultural institutions, are a basic foundation block of economic development in many cities, crucial for their promotion of the tourism industry. He found that 3 out of every 10 visitors came to London for its museums. In *The Economic Importance of the Arts* (1988), Myerscough et al. demonstrated the economic value of the culture industry in the way that arts institutions can create job opportunities and provide the incidental value which stimulates both tourism and local development.

Museums are a central part of the tourism industry, encouraging tourists' spending (Myerscough et al. 1988). Economic benefits relate directly to the profile of cultural tourists: they are more educated and have higher incomes than other tourists, which results in more money spent per visit and longer stays on average. When visitors go into a region to visit its museums, they will normally consume food, drink, even accommodation. The Policy Studies Institute (PSI) argues that museums can attract tourists and day-trippers into the locality to spend money on admissions, hotels, shopping and restaurants, improving the economic growth of the region as a result (1992). This positive benefit for the local economy is called economic impact. By measuring the economic impact, the size of the benefit can be detected, offering powerful evidence to convince the public to support these museums. Heilbrun and Gray (2001) showed how America started to emphasize the economic value of culture and the arts in the 70's. They concluded that the economic impact of culture can be measured in terms of direct, indirect and induced expenditure. Economic impact can be defined as

the total amount of additional expenditure generated within a city, which could be directly attributable to the event" (UK Sports, 1999).

To justify them in terms of economic impact, it must be proved that museums can attract extra visitors and extra money for the area. In economic impact studies, this first round spending, called direct impact, is the easiest to measure.

The second round spending, for example when museum restaurants purchase ingredients from local suppliers, is called indirect impact. The museum employees spending their wages in the local area represents the induced impact. To sum up, the economic impact museums have on their local communities is important. Although some benefits are incidental, their effects are far-reaching.

### **C. Superstar museums:**

The increasingly important role of museums is evidenced by the rise of the so-called 'superstar museums' (Frey, 1998), must-see destinations on the tourist itinerary. These superstar museums can have a significant economic impact on their home city: the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Tate Gallery in London, and the Museumsquarter in Vienna have all played a major role in the regeneration of their respective cities, impacting not only upon the culture but also politics, society, economy and the environment. Superstar museums are huge and they represent a rich tourism resource; these museums can contribute significantly to a city's economy.

According to Heilbrun & Gray (2001), two factors determine the scale of arts and culture events in cities: the cost of the events and the level of demand. Where there are many museums, the scale of events will be raised: the bigger the city, the bigger the economic scale of its arts and culture events. Not all museums have the economic potential of the superstar museums, however. They may not have famous collections and the experience they offer for visitors may be limited. But even these museums can contribute to the cultural image of a city, and by working together with superstar museums in clusters, these museums can also influence local development. Superstar museums sit at the hub of a cultural production chain which integrates a variety of local resources – transportation services, hotels, restaurants, souvenir and other shops. This chain may well have the potential to revive the local economy.

## **III. OBSERVATIONS – THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ETHIOPIA**

The first measure taken in **Ethiopia** towards safeguarding the nation's historical and cultural heritage was when archaeological research began in collaboration with a French team of scientists. Due to the continuing research, they arose the need to organize an institution to **preserve and exhibit the collections**. The **National Museum of Ethiopia** was established in 1944 and began its activities by exhibiting a few archaeological collections as well as some ceremonial costumes and ethnographic objects. The museum gradually improved and developed, in the course of which it transferred to the building **where it is located today**. One of the major objectives of the museum is to present selected artifacts worthy of exhibition using the **best display techniques** available as a means of both education and enjoyment for the general public.

Exhibits of the National Museum are presented under the following four main sections: **Paleontology and pre-history**: Lucy and other fossils including stone tools; **Historical and archaeological findings** that depict the early history from the pre-Axumite times to the 16th century AD; **Ethnography**: traditional and ceremonial costumes, jewellery, etc., reflecting the diverse cultures of the various ethnic groups; **Modern Art**: selected paintings and sculptures from different Ethiopian artists, such as Maitre Artist Laureate Afevork Tekle. Almost every object has a written description so that visitors can learn about the nation's rich history.

Besides its regular services, the museum organizes **special tour programs** for students and interested groups on request. The museum also controls the export of historical and cultural relics abroad, i.e. it investigates the souvenirs purchased by tourists and other visitors in order to **protect the heritage** from being exported. A special section of the museum is authorized to manage and examine the **historical value and purity** of the objects to be exported.



Fig.2: National Museum at Addis Ababa

Later, the National Museum diversified its activities and organised into three working department, i.e. the conservation department, the documentation department and the exhibition and research department. The NME at present has four main exhibition sections. The basement

is dedicated to archaeological and paleo anthropological sections.

This area shows the previously mentioned hominids. The first floor contains objects from ancient and medieval periods, as well as regalia and memorabilia from former rulers, who include Emperor Haile Selassie. The second floor show art work in a chronological order, from traditional to contemporary works. These include murals, Afevork Tekle and other Ethiopian artists. Finally, the third floor has an ethnographic display. Here, the museum tries to give an overview of the cultural richness and variety of the peoples of Ethiopia.

Finally it moved in the old building of the present compound which was formerly the ministry of foreign affairs. Since 1999 the Ethiopian National Museum, displays its collection in the new building which was purposely built for it. At first, the National Museum started displaying a few collections donated by the royal family and their close associates. At present, the National Museum displays numerous artifacts mainly from archaeology. The national museum of Ethiopia has ethnographical, traditional and contemporary art exhibits and historical relics. The present exhibition halls are divided in four sections:

- The basement is devoted to paleontology and prehistory.
- The first floor displays culture items from ancient, medieval and contemporary Ethiopian societies respectively.
- The second floor is devoted to traditional and contemporary Ethiopian art.
- At the third floor visitors have good opportunity to see the mosaic of ethnographic records of the country?

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Ethiopian National Museum is one of the documentation about the culture of the Nation from prehistoric until the present. It provides also technical advice to other Museums throughout Ethiopia. 1936/37 and during its 56 years of existence it has changed its location three times. At the beginning, it was located at the national library, and then it moved to the lounge of the National Bank.

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